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Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature

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SELF AND OTHERS:  
THE DIARY OF A DERVISH  
IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ISTANBUL  
AND FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVES  
IN OTTOMAN LITERATURE

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Ottoman literary history, indeed all Ottoman cultural history, has been traditionally viewed within the framework of a dualistic schema: courtly (high, learned, orthodox, cosmopolitan, polished, artificial, stiff, inaccessible to the masses) versus popular (folk, tainted with unorthodox beliefs-practices and superstitions, but pure and simple in the sense of preserving “national” spirit, natural, honest). This schema took shape under the influence of two major factors. On the one hand, there was the impact of the two-tiered model of cultural and religious studies in nineteenth-century Europe with its relatively sharp distinction between “high” and “low” traditions.<sup>(1)</sup> On the other, there were the ideological needs of incipient Turkish nationalism to distance itself from the Ottoman elite while embracing some form of populism. In relation to poetry and music, a certain allowance has been made for the traditions of Sufi orders. But this does not

(\*) Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Princeton University (April 1985) and Harvard University (April 1987). I am grateful to Professors Peter Brown, Avrom Udovitch, and Lucette Valensi for their learned comments, valuable insights, and invaluable encouragement.

(1) For a penetrating exposition and critique of the “two-tiered” model, see Peter Brown, *The cult of the saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), especially pp. 12-22.

necessarily imply a transcendence of the dualism since Sufism itself has not been able to escape the roundabout intrusion of the same schema, dividing it into a courtly/aristocratic version, mostly associated with Sunnism and conformism, versus its popular counterpart, characterized as unorthodox or even heterodox and potentially rebellious.

I did not set up the traditional dualistic framework to attack it as a falsehood or as a rhetorical device to provide me with a punching bag for the rest of this paper. I believe the distinction between courtly and popular traditions in Ottoman civilization is useful (after sifting through some of the attached values) in providing the two poles of cultural activity in certain respects such as linguistic usage or literary genre conventions. Yet it has permeated and dominated Ottoman studies to the virtual extinction of shades or texture, namely the variegated spectrum of expressive dynamism lying between those two poles. Here, I intend to address this problem in reference to a selected group of original narrative sources of a personal nature produced in an urban milieu that defy being classified either as courtly or popular.

The promising beginnings made by Fuat Köprülü towards literary history as part of a sociologically-informed *Kulturgeschichte*, which would inevitably have led to a more textured reading of Ottoman cultural history, were unfortunately not pursued — mostly due to shifting emphasis in Ottoman studies towards archival research. The opening of the Turkish archives to the scholarly community led to an understandable euphoria over the riches contained in these immense and still largely untapped collections. The availability of much-coveted hard, statistical data in such amounts diverted most Ottomanists with social/historical questions away from the manuscript libraries and away from narrative or “literary” sources. Narrative sources came to assume a secondary role for those seeking concrete data in relation to specific events — mostly of political or military nature — and their value as expressions of Ottoman mental attitudes was to a large degree ignored. The study of Ottoman literature, on the other hand, turned more and more in on itself, becoming a specialized field dealing with formal aesthetic issues at a descriptive level, producing much-needed critical editions without equally-needed contextualization, and mostly avoiding socio-cultural history.

A factor contributing to the directions taken in Ottoman was the world-wide historiographic reaction — spearheaded by the *Annales*

school — to «old fashioned» history-writing with its use of chronologically-ordered narrative modes and its emphasis on politico-military events. The new historical approach, seeking long-term statistical information and hard data on economic and social life, coincided with the opening of the Turkish archives. This led to some of the first truly modern studies in Ottoman economic and social history produced by Turkish and foreign scholars (who came under the spell of the Braudellian project but overlooked its Febvrian counterpart).

We might add here the influence of “Kemalist positivism” and the tendency of most nationalist intellectuals and scholars to treat Ottoman history merely as a background to the inevitable and triumphant emergence of the Turkish nation-state while looking for only certain things in the past with a rigid selectivity. In fact the same teleological orientation, with respect to their own national traditions, has dominated the historiographic output of all nations-states with an Ottoman past. Apart from a few exceptions, such as Pīrī Re’īs or Kātīb Çelebi, Ottoman intellectual life was judged by the yardstick of post-Renaissance European cultural accomplishments and considered as no more than an embarrassment to the Westernizing elite. This made a profound impact on the selection and interpretation of topics and sources in Turkish historical studies.

Lest I be misunderstood, I wish to emphasize my belief that both the opening of the archives and the influence of new historiographic trends have been a blessing in Ottoman studies. Furthermore, going against the current trend of censuring the Republican cultural revolution for the destruction of historical consciousness in Turkey by severing its link to the past, I would even argue that the Kemalist ideological experimentation has (unwittingly, to a large extent) distanced Turkish intellectuals from their object of historical inquiry and paved the way for the emergence of critical historical perspectives — at least, vis-à-vis the Ottoman epoch. In other words, it shook off the yoke, the oppressive weight of sheer accumulated tradition and liberated Turkish intellectual life from the abuse of history in the Nietzschean sense.

It is regrettable, however, that the aura created around these potentialities led to the neglect, I might even say disdain, of narrative and other literary sources, as well as of cultural and intellectual history in general. Rather than dividing their biblio-

graphy into the usual "primary" and "secondary" categories, for instance, some new studies in Ottoman history refer to "archival" and "other" sources where one might find the chronicler 'Aşıkpāşa-zāde lumped together with Wallerstein, the historical sociologist, or the fifteenth-century historian Kritovoulos right next to the modern scholar Kütükoğlu. An even more disturbing development is the widespread tendency to make wholesale characterizations of Ottoman narrative sources, which still remain uncatalogued beyond a rudimentary level and in need of reliable editions. Ottoman chronicles, for instance, the most widely used category in Ottoman narrative sources, are generally dismissed for being repetitions of each other, for being written always from the same (i.e., the official) point of view, and for dwelling only on politico-military events. It is also a common assumption that Ottoman literature did not produce a body of personal writings, a corpus in which authors talked about themselves and their selves, presumably because such self-talk required a strong sense of individuality which medieval (read "pre-Westernization" for the Near East) men and women lacked. Despite the recognition that there are bountiful Ottoman biographies continuing the Islamic tradition, the general assumption is that there are no sources of autobiographic nature, no diaries, memoirs, or personal letters prior to the Tanzimat period.

Thus, I was rather sceptical when I came across an entry under *hâtıral* (memoirs) in Karatay's catalogue of the Topkapı Palace Library, probably sharing the same scepticism with many previous researchers who were disinclined to waste their time on a kind of source which was conveniently believed to be non-existent. I decided to try my luck, however, and thus started my obsession with Ottoman personal literature; for I soon discovered that this was a diary kept by an Ottoman dervish for four years from the beginning of 1072 A.H. (27 August 1661) to the end of 1075 A.H. (13 July 1665), and curiously titled *Şoḥbetnâme*.<sup>(2)</sup> Since then, I have found a few other, shorter personal records, while various researchers, independently of each other,

(2) *Şoḥbetnâme*, ms. in two volumes, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi [hereafter, TSK], E.H. 1426 (= vol. 1), E.H. 1418 (= vol. 2). In the meantime, an introductory article on the *Şoḥbetnâme* was published by Orhan Şaik Gökyay in *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 14 (February 1985): 56-64. The source has previously attracted the attentions of Halil İnalçik (see his forthcoming article "Maṭbah" in *EI*<sub>2</sub>) and Suraiya Faroqhi.

have already uncovered parallel sources since the publication three decades ago of 'Osman Ağa's seventeenth century memoirs describing his captivity among the Austrians. It was prefaced at that time by Richard Kreutel as the "single, relatively extensive autobiography known from old Ottoman literature".<sup>(3)</sup> All these discoveries have thus far remained disparate, awaiting attempts at collective treatment and evaluations of their contribution towards redefining the traditional boundaries of Ottoman social and cultural history as well as towards formulating new approaches to the history of mentalities and perceptions of self within society.

#### THE INTERTEXT

This paper will introduce and discuss the *Şoḥbetnâme*, without attempting either to provide an exhaustive inventory and analysis of the wealth of information contained in it or to deal with its philological and literary aspects at length, all of which shall await the planned publication of this source and its detailed study. Here I shall be primarily concerned with highlighting what seems to me to be the areas in which this diary can offer its most refreshing illumination: the social networks, the web of spaces and forms of sociability spun by a dervish in seventeenth-century Istanbul, and his day-to-day attitude to life. But first I will briefly survey related Ottoman sources with an aim to bring attention to a corpus of first person narratives which enable us to develop fresh perspectives on Ottoman social life and mental attitudes in the post-Süleymanic age. Since it is neither possible nor desirable to be exhaustive here, I intend simply to indicate various sub-categories of what I have called personal literature, giving a few examples in each. Looking at these texts jointly, new insights can be gained into the most dominant element in the intellectual life of that era — namely the all-pervasive perception

(3) *Leben und Abenteuer des Dolmetschers Osman Ağa. Eine türkische Autobiographie aus der Zeit der grossen Kriege gegen Österreich*, eds. and trs. R. F. Kreutel and O. Spies (Bonn, 1954). For a revised edition and translation, see idem., *Der Gefangene der Giauren. Die abenteuerlichen Schicksale des Dolmetschers Osman Ağa aus Temeschwar von ihm selbst erzählt* (Graz, Wien, Köln, 1962). The original text has been published by Kreutel, *Die Autobiographie des Dolmetschers Osman Ağa aus Temeschwar* (Hertford, England, 1980). For a rendering into modern Turkish, see Harun Tolasa, *Kendi Kalemikle Temeşvarlı Osman Ağa (Bir Osmanlı Sipâhisinin Hayatı ve Esirlik Hatıraları)* (Konya, 1986).

of rapid social change and dislocation ("disorder and decline" from the Ottoman point of view). While this seems to have fostered a process of self-consciousness and observation at the levels of both the person and the social order at large, these new cultural orientations put new demands on literature, calling its genre conventions to task and inspiring fresh departures.

Such departures must have struck Ottoman literati to be so strikingly novel, and perhaps also unworthy, that most of the works to be mentioned below proved themselves too elusive to be included in contemporary biographical and literary studies which chose to function within the confines of recognized conventions. The best illustration of this is the case of Evliyâ Çelebi, the traveller. How can one indeed talk of the personal dimensions in the intellectual life of the seventeenth century and not feel obliged to come to terms with the ubiquitous Evliyâ Çelebi whose formation can be traced to a milieu which paralleled and even overlapped with the one depicted in the *Şoḥbetnâme*? Seyyid Hasan, the diarist who kept the *Şoḥbetnâme*, studied *Kur'ân* recitation with the same Evliyâ Mehmed Efendi who had been Evliyâ Çelebi's tutor a few years earlier and after whom the latter was named.<sup>(4)</sup> The personal and the social in its widest sense flow together in the latter's captivating portrait of the whole empire in the form of a travelogue which, after all, is an autobiographic sub-genre. The Travels of Evliyâ Çelebi is the most monumental example of the first person narratives which shall be outlined below and within the intertext of which the *Şoḥbetnâme* has to be situated. It is striking that just like Seyyid Hasan's diary and most of the other autobiographic pieces mentioned here, Evliyâ Çelebi's gargantuan work seems to have gone largely unnoticed in Ottoman belles lettres until Joseph von Hammer 'discovered' it. Like those numerous men of extraordinary skills who are mentioned in Evliyâ's narrative and who seem near-mythical since there is no other historical record of their existence, — Hezârfen Ahmed Çelebi who flew over the Bosphorus, or the tightrope walkers who convened near Ankara and displayed mind-boggling

(4) Seyyid Hasan's tutors, Evliyâ Efendi among them, are identified in Şeyḫi, *Veḳâyi'ü'l-fuzelâ*, ms. in two volumes, TSK, R. 1445 (= vol. 1) and R. 1447 (= vol. 2), II: 25a. Evliyâ Çelebi, the traveller, mentions Evliyâ Efendi as his tutor in several passages; e.g., see *Seyâhatnâme*, 10 vols. (Istanbul, 1878-1940), 1: 244-245.

feats of acrobacy, or Meḥmed Efendi of Hezârgrâd who was a master watch-repairman yet totally blind — Evliyâ himself is amiss in Ottoman biographical works until the mid-19th century.

For closer literary parallels to the *Şoḥbetnâme*, we can turn to some other contemporary works which might, with some qualification, be called diaries. Among these is an Arabic work, *Vâkı'ât*, by Şeyḥ Maḥmūd Ḥüdâî, whose influential career as a Sufi spanned from the late-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>(5)</sup> Even though it is organized in diary form with daily entries, the largest portion of the work covers Ḥüdâî's conversations as a novice with his *şeyḥ* on themes related to sufism. This aspect of the book brings it perhaps closer to the *menâkıbnâme* genre which is only of tangential interest here. Even more of a *menâkıb* collection is Şun'ullah Ğaybî's book containing the sayings and conversations of Oğlanlar Şeyḫi İbrâhîm Efendi, the controversial *şeyḫ* of the Melâmî order.<sup>(6)</sup> Strikingly, this work, written at around the same time as Seyyid Ḥasan's diary, is also titled *Şoḥbetnâme*, but here *şoḥbet* is clearly used in its Turkish sense, namely a conversation or dialogue. Even though not organized in diary form, another work by Ḥüdâî, *Tecelliyât*, should be cited here since it contains the author's own records of his mystical visions and experiences involving communication with God or the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>(7)</sup> Whatever the status of these works in relation to diary as a genre, they reveal that others in Seyyid Ḥasan's milieu recorded their personal experiences with different emphases and in different forms.

Since they emanate from the same milieu in which the *Şoḥbetnâme* was penned, these works also raise the intriguing question of its literary precedents. It is clear that recording the worldly and miraculous deeds, the words and visions of one's *şeyḫ* was a

(5) Maḥmūd Ḥüdâî (Seyyid, Üsküdarlı), *Vâkı'ât* (also known as *Al-tıbr al-masbûk*). 3 vols. bound together, Üsküdar Selimağa, Hüdayi Ktp. 249 (possibly an autograph). On Maḥmūd Ḥüdâî's life and works in general, see Ziver Tezeren, *Seyyid Aziz Maḥmūd Hüdâî, I: Hayâtı, Şahsiyeti, Tarikati ve Eserleri* (Istanbul, 1984). Other copies of the *Vâkı'ât* are listed on p. 71.

(6) See A. Gölpinarlı, *Melâmîlik ve Melâmiler* (Istanbul, 1931), 114-122; and, İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kütahya Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1932), 235. Gölpinarlı and Uzunçarşılı each possessed personal copies of this work at the time they wrote their works; Gölpinarlı also cites Konya, Müze Ktp., ms. no. 931.

(7) For various copies of *Tecelliyât*, see Tezeren, *Mahmūd Hüdâî*, 83-84.

respected activity in Sufi circles. Seyyid Hasan had in a way produced a work of that nature but inverted the process and recorded his own deeds. Was he thereby asserting that he should have been sitting at the *şeyh*'s post? If so, this may explain the fact the abandoned his diary soon after being appointed to a *şeyhlik* as we shall see. What sets the *Şoḥbetnâme* apart, however, is not necessarily its first-person stance: *Tecelliyât* has the same feature, and could be considered more of an auto-hagiography since, unlike Seyyid Hasan's work, it records the author's mystical experiences. Also, Niyâzî-i Mısrî, the charismatic and often outrageous mystic contemporary of Seyyid Hasan's, produced a treatise which includes many memoirs related in a first person voice.<sup>(8)</sup> Even then, there is no other work so full of the routine and the mundane and so slavishly bound to the diary format as the *Şoḥbetnâme*. Namely, not only the first-person stance of the *Şoḥbetnâme*, but also its form and content need to be explained, and in that regard it is much more difficult to point to a literary precedent in Ottoman-Turkish literature. Only further research into Ottoman reading patterns can shed light on the question of whether someone like Seyyid Hasan could have been aware of similar literary experiments in other Islamic cultures, such as the better-known diary of a Hanbalite in eleventh century Baghdad.<sup>(9)</sup>

Some eighteenth-century manuscripts, on the other hand, constitute clear-cut examples of Ottoman diaries. One of these, surprisingly discovered in the Prime Ministry Archives, covers twenty-four years from 1711 to 1735 in 130 folios. Written by Telhîsî Muştafâ Efendi, a bureaucrat, it has a much broader perspective than Seyyid Hasan's journal of a close-knit community.<sup>(10)</sup> Muştafâ Efendi, too, had joined an order as he

(8) *Mecmû'a-i kelimât-i kuşsiyye-i hazret-i Mısrî*, Bursa Merkez İl Halk Ktp., Orhan Gazi 690.

(9) George Makdisi, ed., "Autograph Diary of an Eleventh Century Historian of Baghdād," in 5 parts, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 18 (1956): 9-31 and 239-60; 19 (1957): 13-38, 281-303, and 426-443.

(10) Telhîsî Muştafâ Efendi's diary was first introduced with selections by Fazıl Işıközlü, "Başbakanlık Arşivinde yeni bulunmuş olan ve Sadreddin Zâde Telhisi Mustafa Efendi tarafından tutulduğu anlaşılan H. 1123 (1711)-1184 (1735) yıllarına ait bir Ceride (Jurnal) ve Eklentisi," *VII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara, 1970*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1933), 2: 508-534. The diary has been further studied and selections from it have been published by İsmail Erünsal, "Bir Osmanlı Efendisi'nin Günlüğü: Sadreddinzâde Telhisi Mustafa Efendi ve Ceridesi," *Kaynaklar*, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 77-81.

occasionally mentions his *seyh* with great respect, but his world and consequently his diary are filled with public affairs such as hostilities toward Russia, deaths or significant appointments of dignitaries, the Sultan's activities, and quite regularly rising prices. He also expresses strong emotions in front of most of these events. For example when officers were appointed in 1725, during the so-called Tulip Period, to cut the fashionable European-style collars off of dresses worn by women in public, Muştafâ Efendi burst with approval: "This is a strike right on target! May God allow it to continue and persist."<sup>(11)</sup> Another interesting aspect of this diary is that in the early nineteenth century, someone annotated it with marginal notes, commenting on Muştafâ Efendi's observations from the perspective of nearly a century later. Where Muştafâ Efendi had complained that carpenter's wages had risen to seventy aspers per day, for instance, the commentator wrote in 1819: "strange, strange, if you had lived to see today, you would explode; o molla, wages now are sixhundred aspers!"<sup>(12)</sup>

Another diary from the eighteenth century was kept by a young *müderris* between 1749 and 1756. Şıdkî Muştafâ, who was to reach the honorary Mecca rank later in his life, left a record of his early struggles for an *'ilmiye* career.<sup>(13)</sup> He, too, was writing from a broader perspective than Seyyid Hasan's, mentioning the activities of Sultans, or appointments and dismissals of dignitaries, but he was much more interested in the fortunes of the ulema than anything else.

Only a few sentences are left from another diary kept in the early eighteenth century, most of its pages having been torn. Remaining fragments reveal that the author, a *sancakbeyi*, wrote not more than a line each day, specifying his travels or appointments. He also kept a record of the alms he distributed which renders it somewhat akin to late medieval Florentine account book-family memoirs, the precursors of the modern diary form in European literature.<sup>(14)</sup> The highly routine manner in

(11) See entry for 23 C.II 1134.

(12) See entry for 21 Şafer 1135.

(13) See M. Zilfi, "The Diary of Müderris: A New Source for Ottoman Biography," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 1 (1977): 157-172.

(14) TSK, H. 1766. On Florentine diaries, see P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 24 (1956) : 183-205. For an inventory of the surviving examples, see Fulvio

which these personal accounts are kept suggests that such journals were probably not so rare and that others might surface through an investigation of the numerous account books-cum-arithmetics manuals called *hesâb defteri*. At any rate, the manuscript containing the *sancağbeyi*'s notebook offers yet another surprise on the reverse side where the same author kept a record of his dreams, naming that part of his book "Dream Book/*Düşnâme*". In this section, he not only describes his dreams, but also reports on those that he claims to have "come true".

Such dream-logs appear to constitute a sub-category in their own right in Ottoman personal literature, as might only be expected through reading Jean-Claude Schmitt's illuminating article on the profound connection between autobiographic writing and the recounting of dreams.<sup>(15)</sup> In a manuscript from the early eighteenth-century, 'Aşiye Hâtûn, a woman from a Balkan town, records her dreams in the form of letters to her *şeyh*.<sup>(16)</sup> Feeling guilty about her loss of allegiance to a former *şeyh*, and frequently dreaming of being married to a new one, she penned one of the rare Ottoman texts with a confessional bent. As an example of women's literature, it also opens doors to the uncharted realm of Ottoman women. For an earlier collection of dreams, we can turn to a manuscript from the late sixteenth century, and read the nightly visions of none other than Sultan Murâd III (r. 1574-1595).<sup>(17)</sup> This sultan, whose reign has traditionally been viewed as the beginning of decline concomitant with cultural introversion, is alleged in contemporary sources to have displayed a heightened interest in esoteric sciences including dream interpretation. A major criticism directed by Gelibolulu Muştafâ 'Âlî, one of the earliest and sharpest of the decline-conscious Ottoman intellectuals, against Murâd III is that the latter bestowed undeserved

Pezzarosa, "La tradizione fiorentina della memorialistica. Con un'appendice: Per un catalogo dei testi memorialistici fiorentina a stampa," in Gian Maria Anselmi et al., *La "memoria" dei mercatores* (Bologna, 1980). Two examples are published by G. Brucker, ed., and Julia Martines, tr., *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati* (New York, 1967).

(15) Jean-Claude Schmitt, "L'autobiographie rêvée," *Sources: Travaux Historiques*, no. 3-4, (1985): 153-166.

(16) 'Aşiye Hâtûn's dreams, copied down in 1114 A.H. (1702/3), are to be found in a *mecmû'a* in TSK, H. 388, between folios 46b-55a.

(17) *Kitâb-i Menâmât*, Nuruosmaniye Ktp., ms. 2599.

high honors and posts to an ignorant pseudo-Sufi, Şeyh Şücâ', who happened to interpret one of the sultan's dreams "correctly."<sup>(18)</sup> Indeed the sultan seems to have diligently dictated his dreams and, like 'Aşiye Hâtûn, sent them to Sufi *şeyhs* for interpretation. We find echoes of this practice in a collection of Maḥmûd Hüdâî's correspondance with various sultans including Murâd III. In Hüdâî's *Mektûbât* (Letters), one frequently encounters the *şeyh*'s interpretations of dreams dispatched to him through royal agents.<sup>(19)</sup>

Be they records of inner or social experiences, all the works mentioned thus far deal with the Ottoman world. Memoirs of captivity in Christian hands, on the other hand, provide us with accounts of personal experiences and observations outside *dârü'l-islâm* — before the flurry of Ottoman diplomatic reports from Europe in the eighteenth century, which have been recognized as signs of Westernizing tendencies in Ottoman civilization and need not be treated here. The earliest captivity memoir that we know about is reported to have been written in the 1570's by a courtier of Selîm II.<sup>(20)</sup> Having probably been captured by Italians at the battle of Lepanto he stayed in Rome for four years when, as he tells us in another work, he composed an account of his adventures, of which unfortunately no extant copies are known. In the first years of the seventeenth-century, another memoir of enslavement was written by an Ottoman kadi who had remained captive in Rhodes.<sup>(21)</sup> This published account has only

(18) Muştafâ 'Âlî, *Kühû'l-ahbâr*, Nuruosmaniye, Ktp. ms. 3409, 292b-293b.

(19) *Tezâkir-i Hüdâî*, Fatih 2572; see 133v-134r for an example of a dream (apparently seen by Murâd III) and its interpretation. For other collections of his letters, see Tezeren, *Mahmûd Hüdâî*, 84.

(20) G. M. Meredith-Owens, "Traces of a Lost Autobiographical Work by a Courtier of Selim II," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23 (1960): 456-463. The author of this lost work is one Hindî Maḥmûd. Unless he also had the pseudonym Esîrî, there is another lost work of the same nature, mentioned by 'Aşık Çelebi, the biographer, in his *Meşâ'irü's-şü'erâ'*, fascimile published by Meredith-Owens (London, 1971), 44a-b.

(21) First described by İ. Parmaksızoğlu, "Bir Türk kadısının esâret hatıraları," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi* [hereafter *İÜEF*] *Tarih Dergisi*, no. 8 (1953): 77-85. Published in slightly abridged form by F. İz, "Macuncuzâde Mustafanın Malta Anıları: Sergüzeşt-i Esîrî-i Mâlta," *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı-Belâten* 1970 (Istanbul, 1971): 69-121. Macuncuzâde cannot be the same Esîrî whose biography is given by 'Aşık Çelebi (see above note 20), since the biographer died in 1571 while the former fell captive in 1597. Esîrî apparently served as a generic penname for those who told of their captivity.

superficially been compared to similar memoirs kept by Europeans under Ottoman captivity, and remains to be studied in depth, particularly after being brought together with two other contemporary captivity memoirs. One of these, containing the adventures of 'Oşmân Ağa in Austrian hands, has been published in German translation three decades ago, and enjoyed perhaps the most extensive scholarly attention among other examples of personal writing mentioned here.<sup>(22)</sup>

A similar but unevaluated work is an Egyptian Janissary's record of his experiences in French captivity towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>(23)</sup> This soldier's account is much more theoretical than the other captivity memoirs, in the sense that its author seriously attempts to compare the morals, political system and social life of France with those of the Ottoman empire. He writes mostly about military organization (displaying great curiosity in military material culture such as colors and patterns in banners and soldiers' clothes), but also manages to describe the rules of succession in France, the Louvre, the streets of Paris, and the ease with which French women can be had. Praising various aspects of life in France, the author is severely critical of his own society, which he also explicitly blames for its bigotry against the infidels. As an unexpectedly early example of changing attitudes towards Europe and emanating from outside the courtly circles in Istanbul, this work requires much closer attention.

It must be recognized, however, that memoirs of captivity pose potential risks as examples of personal literature, for they may be reflections of a literary device rather than actual lived experiences. Unable to make direct criticisms, an author may choose to display his critical sense on the basis of indirect comparisons. However, such strategems were not required to point to disorders in the Ottoman system and to censure wrongdoings since these were after all accepted pastimes in Ottoman society as evinced by copious treatises of decline and reform. It is more likely that the device of recording one's "personal experiences" among the infidels would be needed by

(22) For 'Oşmân Ağa, see above, note 3. Also see Kreutel, ed., *Zwischen Paschas und Generälen: Bericht des 'Osman Ağa aus Temeschwar über die Höhepunkte seines Wirkens als Diwansdolmetscher und Diplomat* (Graz, Vienne, Cologne, 1966).

(23) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. turc suppl. 221. I am preparing an edition of this treatise.

authors who also intended to bring up the example of Europe as a new model of emulation. That this could represent a hazardous undertaking is clear from the tension which sets the tone at the very beginning of the French memoirs of the Egyptian Janissary who seems constantly aware and threatened that some officers do not appreciate his favorable remarks on France; he has to play up the fact that his comments are based on sound observations of many years as a captive (hence, victim) of the infidel.

Janissary Süleymân's personal experiences, even though they may well have been genuine, appear as a "documentary" dressing over a speculative and normative treatise in comparative politics, as if lurking beneath the tale of captivity there is a third-person discourse waiting to come out of its first-person disguise. In that respect, while it bears an obvious affinity to Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi's celebrated embassy report on France (1727) as an eyewitness account, this work is clearly a precursor also of the well-known "Dialogue between a Christian and a Muslim Officer" (ca. 1710) where the format of dialogue is no more than a clever device to create a personalized, hence seemingly "factual," setting for yet another enterprise in a normative comparison of two politico-military systems.<sup>(24)</sup>

It is also likely that "memoirs" of captivity and struggle with the infidel may provide a suspenseful exotic setting for a novelistic narrative. Andreas Tietze has demonstrated, for instance, that a picaresque novella is concealed in a seventeenth century narrative which purports to be a personal letter.<sup>(25)</sup> It is supposedly written by a manumitted slave who turns to commerce, departs on a sea journey, survives through many perils and misfortunes in the Mediterranean, and recounts his adventures among the corsairs to his ex-owner in the form of a letter. The "letter," however, is

(24) The "dialogue" has been published by Faik R. Unat, ed., "Ahmet III Devrine Ait Bir Islahat Takriri," *Tarih Vesikaları* 1 (1941): 107-121. For an interesting combination of "documentation" and political fantasy in another early modern society, see D. C. Waugh, *The Great Turkes Defiance: On the History of the Apocryphal Correspondence of the Ottoman Sultan in its Muscovite and Russian Variants* (Columbus, Ohio, 1978). On the penetration of fiction into Russian literature through "documentary" genres, see also the foreword by Academician D. S. Likhachev on pp. 1-4.

(25) A. Tietze, tr., "Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän. Ein türkischer Seeräuberroman aus dem 17. Jahrhundert," *Acta Orientalia* (Leiden) 19 (1942): 152-210. The Turkish text was published by F. İz, "Makâle-i Zindancı Mahmut Kapudan." *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 14 (1965): 111-150.

given a title in the manuscript, and the title, "The Exploits of Captain Mahmud, the Turnkey," betrays the fact that the true protagonist of this narrative is a captain of the corsairs. The author or copyist was at least able to settle on a title which warns the reader on what to expect. It must have proved less easy to confer a consistent voice on a work perched uneasily between a letter and a novella; the first person plural with which the story begins soon falls into disuse, is replaced by the third person, only to be resuscitated once in a while without any transition.<sup>(26)</sup> Such token gestures of homecoming to non-fiction, to "actual" experiences lived by the author, seem no more than half-hearted attempts at artificial respiration as if the author suddenly remembered that he started out writing or pretending to write a letter the fiction of which he wants to keep alive. Leaving one's work in a voice-less and genre-less limbo seems to have been still preferable to writing avowed fiction.

Resort to the format of a letter was only natural for these works which had to function in a space of literacy where a recognized and accepted means to bring factual information, fantasy, and personal expression to an intersection was through letter-writing — another neglected category within the corpus of first person literature. While official letters have drawn the interest of Ottomanist scholars in terms of both their content and form, collections of personal correspondance remain largely unexplored. They provide invaluable glimpses into not only the styles and modes of expression of people from various social strata and educational backgrounds, but also the daily concerns of dignitaries as well as of ordinary people outside the world of high politics. Moreover, for those seeking information on mercantile relations and practices, letters might prove to be particularly useful. Also to be included in this category are the *'arīzas*, petitions to sultans, written mostly by lesser members of the *'askerī* class as well as by women to voice their personal complaints. Unfortunately letters, widely dispersed in both

(26) A similar confusion can be detected in *Zwischen Paschas und Generälen*, 'Osman Aga's hodge-podge collection of official letters and accounts of discussions held by various diplomatic missions exchanged between Ottoman Hungarian provinces and Central European powers. Unable to decide on what he should make of his own participation as a scribe-translator in these dealings from a narrative point of view, he allows his text to vacillate between the first-and the third-person voices.

archival and manuscript collections, remain unindexed. Yet it is certainly worth pursuing the lead of Fekete who noted as early as in 1932 that, for the literary and social historian, Ottoman private letters are much more than "greetings and idletalk."<sup>(27)</sup>

Finally we must turn to the one category which was not mentioned so far but can not be neglected in a survey of personal literature: autobiography. Admittedly, there are not sufficient examples of Ottoman autobiography to change the judgement (widely held since Jacob Burckhardt's seminal study on the Renaissance) that the proliferation of autobiographic writings represents a formal expression of the emergence of individuality in post-Renaissance European culture.<sup>(28)</sup> It is extremely significant for this study, however, to note that the notion of individuality, totally dissociated from identification with any group according to Burckhardt's famous depiction, now seems to have more leaks than it once did. In a masterly essay on early modern European conceptions of the self, Natalie Davis, by pointing "to apertures in the boundary of the person as important conditions in defining the self," has argued that "the exploration of the self in sixteenth century France was made in conscious relation to the groups to which people belonged... and that the greatest obstacle to self-definition was not embeddedness but powerlessness and poverty."<sup>(29)</sup> This insight seems singularly relevant for the conception of selfhood displayed in the works analyzed here, even after taking seriously Davis's caveat that one must not be universalizing in examining ideas of the self.

(27) Ludwig Fekete, ed., *Türkische Schriften aus dem Archive des Palatins Nikolaus Esterhazy, 1606-1645* (Budapest, 1932). Fekete's introduction, entitled "Die Privatbriefe als Quellenmaterial zur türkischen Kulturgeschichte," is on pp. lviii-lxvii. For two interesting examples of letters written by Turkish captives, see Halil Sahillioğlu, "Akdenizde Korsanlara Esir Düşen Abdi Çelebi'nin Mektubu," *İÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, no. 17 (1962): 241-256. Natalie Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France* (Stanford, California, 1987) is an inspiring study of judicial supplications, to which the Ottoman petitions mentioned in this discussion present many parallels, in terms of their narrative qualities and ideological subtext rather than their factual content.

(28) Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.G.C. Middlemore (Oxford and London, 1945). Also see Karl Joachim Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago and London, 1978).

(29) N. Z. Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth Century France," in T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, D. E. Wellbery, eds., *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, 1986): 53-63.

Strikingly, none of the Ottoman sultans left any works resembling the autobiographic pieces of other Turco-Muslim rulers such as Timur, Bâbur, Jahângîr, or Shâh Tahmâsb, who were eager to leave behind a first-person account of their exploits whether they actually wrote, dictated, or commissioned them. The lives of Ottoman sultans, in the numerous works that were composed for them, were submerged in the history of the empire told as the story of the House of Osman, the only genuine "family chronicle" in Ottoman culture. Yet to a ruler of the late seventeenth century, Muşţafâ II (r. 1695-1703), the boundaries between his private self and public personality seem to have lost their clarity; over dinner one day he asked the official chronicler whether the very act of his eating spinach ("the common soldier's food") that day would find a place in the chronicle. Thus it did.<sup>(30)</sup>

Royal abstinence from autobiography was not followed by Ottoman society. Here it is clear that Ottoman intellectuals were acquainted with earlier examples from Arab and Persian literature, such as those by Al-Ġazâlî, Ibn Sînâ, and Nâser-e Khosraw.<sup>(31)</sup> It must be due to his extensive grounding in such works and numerous others which he avidly read that Kâtib Çelebi's autobiographic essay at the end of his *Mizânü'l-hakık* seems to fit squarely in the category of "Autobibliographie mit curriculum vitae," treated by Georg Misch as a type of first-person writing common in pre-Ottoman Islamic literature.<sup>(32)</sup>

A more playful and innovative autobiography is the *Sergüzeşt* of Za'îfî, a mid-sixteenth century poet who relates in verse his adult

(30) Cited in R. A. Abou-El-Haj, "The Narcissism of Mustafa II (1695-1703): A Psychohistorical Study," *Studia Islamica* 40 (1974): 115-131; see p. 120. For a rare example of a family chronicle written for a household other than the House of Osman, see Behçetî İsmâ'il Efendi, *Tâ'rih-i sülâle-i Köprülü*, Köprülü Library (Istanbul), ms. 212.

(31) Of Georg Misch's incomplete yet monumental *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, vol. III, part 2 (Frankfurt a.M., 1962) devotes pp. 905-1076 to autobiographic writing in Islam in the Middle Ages. His coverage of the Islamic civilization is based extensively on Franz Rosenthal, "Die arabische Autobiographie," *Studia Arabica* I (Rome, *Analecta Orientalia* 14, 1937): 1-40. Professor Bernard Lewis has kindly allowed me to read his unpublished "First Person Narrative — The Middle East."

(32) Kâtib Çelebi, *Mizânü'l-hakık fî ihtiyâri'l ehakık*, translated by G. L. Lewis, *The Balance of Truth* (London, 1957).

life and struggles for a successful career, first in trade and then in the *'ilmiye*, with a cynical outlook.<sup>(33)</sup> If there is any soul searching in this work, it is directed not at the poet but rather at the society which is blamed for not being just enough to reward properly a man as deserving as our poet. The same complaint is repeated much more persistently in various autobiographic passages dispersed in the writings of Gelibolulu Muştafâ 'Âlî who died a very bitter man at the end of the sixteenth century. In fact random autobiographical passages can be encountered in almost every manuscript with an introductory chapter on the reasons and circumstances of its composition, called *sebeb-i te'lif*. 'Âlî deserves special mention, however, because he wrote a coherent autobiographic essay of several pages, through which he attempted to prove his reliability as a good councillor and to promote himself for such a position, appended it to his *Counsel to the Sultans*.<sup>(34)</sup>

Contrary to Za'îfî's and 'Âlî's bitter autobiographic notices, Şeyhülislâm Feyzullah Efendi composed a remarkably tranquil autobiography in 1702, one year before he was deposed and brutally murdered at the end of a spectacular revolt known as the Edirne Incident.<sup>(35)</sup> The Şeyhülislâm was in fact one of the main targets of rebellious soldiers joined by a large group of the ulema, mainly because the Şeyhülislâm had seriously disrupted the hierarchical promotion system in the higher *'ilmiye* ranks through excessive nepotism. Feyzullah Efendi exhibits no self-criticism in his autobiography, however. He simply has no confessions or apologies to make. He records without any inhibition, and indeed with pride, that his seventeen year old son was appointed kadi

(33) Za'îfî, *Kitâb-i Sergüzeşt-i Za'îfî*, ed. Robert Anhegger in "16. Asir Şairlerinden Za'îfî," *IÜEF Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 4 (1950): 133-136.

(34) A. Tietze, ed. and tr., *Muştafâ 'Alî's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1979-82), 2: 174-220 (translation on pp. 48-92). For a ground-breaking intellectual biography of that author who seems to have no qualms about asserting and promoting himself, see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli* (Princeton, 1986). For a short self-promotion c.v., written in very poor verse by a petty official in the Balkans, see Lejla Gazic, ed., "Autobiografija u stihu Mostarskog pjesnika Hurremija," *Prilozi za Orijentalni Filologiju* 20-21 (1970-71): 205-211. A similar example from the other end of the empire, written in 1577 by a bey of Northern Iraq to boast of his family's services to the Ottomans and to enjoy the favor of the recently enthroned Murâd III, can be found in İsmet Parmaksızođlu, "Kuzey Irak'ta Osmanlı Hakimiyetinin Kuruluşu ve Memur Bey'in Hatıraları," *Bellelen* 37 (1973): 191-230.

(35) "Feyzullah Efendi'nin Kendi Kaleminden Hal Tercümesi," tr. from Arabic by A. Türek and F. Çetin Derin, in 2 parts in *IÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, no. 23 (1969): 205-218 and no. 24 (1970): 69-92.

with the prestigious Mecca rank, and that his three younger sons, two of them fifteen and the other one fourteen years old, each held the ranks of *müderriş* (equivalent to a professor in modern universities).

Feyzullah Efendi's autobiography may look excessive in his complacency, particularly in the light of our retrospective familiarity with the rest of his story, yet he seems no different from the worried, bitter complainers, 'Alî and Zâ'îfî, or from the contemplative scholar, Kâtib Çelebi, in that there is no third dimension in any of these narratives, no *obvious* distance between the narrator and the narrated self. This avoidance or lack of interest displayed by the authors in gazing at themselves from a three-dimensional perspective is indeed one of the most striking characteristics that these works share with the *Şoĥbetnâme*, to which we shall now turn our attention. We are clearly dealing here with a feature which underlies all of the Ottoman representational and performance arts as will be indicated in the following section.

#### THE DIARY

The *Şoĥbetnâme* starts out, of all things, with the record of the author being shaved by a barber nicknamed "the Velvet" (probably because of his soft touch), of whose shaves we are promptly notified throughout the diary. Indeed, the diarist is most diligent in recording such seemingly insignificant details from his daily life and the names or nicknames of every person with whom he associated during those activities. Yet not once does he mention his own name; throughout the 418 folios-long diary, he refers to himself as "*faķîr*/this poor one." (By the same token, his house is often his "*ġamĥâne*/place of suffering.") Following several hints in the diary, however, we can safely identify its author as Seyyid Hasan ibn eş-Şeyĥ es-Seyyid Mehmed Emin ibn es-Seyyid 'Abdü'l-Hâlik, whose short biography is given in Şeyĥî's *Vekâyi'ü'l-fuzelâ*.<sup>(36)</sup> According to Şeyĥî, who does not give any information on Seyyid Hasan's maternal lineage, his paternal grandfather spent his life as a shrine keeper in the mausoleum of Ebü Eyyüb el-Ensârî. His father, on the other hand, pursued a

(36) Şeyĥî, *Vekâyi'*, II: 24b/25a for the biographies of Seyyid Hasan and his father. His son's vita is on II: 261a.

career in the *'ilmiye* at first, but resigned from a mid-level teaching position in the medrese to — as his contemporaries put it — “withdraw into a corner” in the central Kocamustafapaşa convent of the Ḥalveti-Sünbülî order. The implication of resignation from life in this expression is misleading; Seyyid Mehmed, a shrine-keeper’s son, resigned from the ranks of the ulema, where advancement depended heavily on one’s relations, and joined a Sufi order “dropping out of academic career upon the marriage of his sister” to the *şeyh* of the principal convent of that order.<sup>(37)</sup> When the latter passed away, the seat of the *şeyh* was filled by Ḥasan ‘Adlî Efendi, under whom Seyyid Mehmed “completed his (spiritual education in the Sünbülî) path” *tekmil-i ʔarîkat*) and was appointed *şeyh* in another convent.<sup>(38)</sup> In a few years, upon Ḥasan ‘Adlî Efendi’s death, he was to come back to Kocamustafapaşa in charge of one of the most prestigious and best-financed convents in Istanbul.

Seyyid Ḥasan, our diarist, was born in 1620 to the *şeyh* of the Kocamustafapaşa Sünbülî convent and would probably have enjoyed a more distinguished career had not his father died when Ḥasan was only nine years old. The position of *şeyh* reverted to the former *şeyh*’s family, namely to one of Ḥasan’s cousins who was twenty-five years old. Nevertheless, Seyyid Ḥasan had a proper education and followed his father’s path, awaiting his own chance of advancement in *Sūfiyye* which had become somewhat like a regular career-path in the highly bureaucratized ethos of Ottoman urban society in the post-Süleymanic age. Our diarist was never to occupy the *şeyh*’s seat in Kocamustafapaşa, however. When he was forty-five years old, the year his diary ends, he was given the Ferrüh Kethüdâ convent in Balat, which until then seems to have served as an internship post for those who were being groomed for the more esteemed *şeyhlik* of

(37) The biographer is explicit about a causal connection between the marriage and the change of career (II: 24b): “*Necmüddîn Ḥasan Efendi bunların hemşirelerin tezciv itmekle ʔarîk-i müderrisîni terk eyleyüp...*” The bride from our diarist’s family side brought *siyâdet* (lineage from Prophet Muhammad) to the union of marriage, an honor and title which the offspring of his aunt and Şeyh Necmüddîn el-Yemenî donned thereafter.

(38) Seyyid Mehmed, *Risâle-i ‘Adlî Efendi*, (Istanbul) Üniversite Ktp., İbnülemin M.K. 2956. On page 1 (page, not folio, numbers are given by a modern hand), it is written in a handwriting closely resembling that of Seyyid Ḥasan: “*Bu Risâle-i Adlî [sic!] ceddîm Seyyid Mehmed Efendî hâlliyledür we kendi te’lifidür.*”

Kocamustafapaşa. In Seyyid Hasan's case, Balat was the end of the road where he fulfilled the dual functions of Sufi-leader in the convent and preacher (vā'iz) in the neighboring mosque for the next twenty-four years — an increasingly common combination of functions whereby the state brought the order under tight administrative control, even while it led to resentment among the more orthodox who did not care to see Sufis in the pulpit. The best illustration of the bureaucratization of Ottoman Sufi orders is the fact (expounded with relish in the diary) that Seyyid Hasan's appointment as *şeyh* had to be approved by the Şeyhülislām, himself a government appointee, since the latter controlled all religious-administrative positions such as that of preacher, and being a *şeyh* implied being a preacher in this case and many others.<sup>(39)</sup> Seyyid Hasan, the *şeyh* of Balat, died of the plague in 1688 to be succeeded by his son and, later, grandson. It was his great-grandson's lot to finally make the move to the *şeyh*'s seat in Kocamustafapaşa in 1171 (1757/58), where their line continued to serve the same function into the Republican era.<sup>(40)</sup>

According to his biographer who does not know of the *Şoḥbetnâme*, Seyyid Hasan wrote some poetry with the pseudonym Nürî.<sup>(41)</sup> Other than two mediocre couplets given in this short biographic notice, nothing is known of our author as a poet. The biographer describes him also as fiery preacher who had reached such a stage in his mystical development that he had insight into the past and the future. It is disappointing and somewhat frustrating that none of these qualities are reflected in the diary. There is not a single line of poetry either by the diarist or others. Since the diary continues for a few months after his

(39) *Şoḥbetnâme*, II: 185b.

(40) Zâkir Şükri Efendî, *Die Istanbuler Derwisch-Konvente und ihre Scheiche: Mecmu'a-i Tekaya*, published with notes by Klaus Kreiser and M. Serhan Tayşi (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1980). The chains of succession in the Kocamustafapaşa and Balat convents are on pp. 2-3 and p. 4 respectively. Also see Ayvansarayî, *Tevârîḥ*, ed. F. Derin (Istanbul, 1985), 98-99 for the *silsile* in Balat.

(41) Şeyhî, *Vekâyi*, II: 25a. A later and shorter biographical work does not fail to devote an entry to our diarist, reproducing one of these couplets, but not without adding a sentence which enables us to put his "fame" into perspective: "*Ma'rûf ve meşhûr olan 'Abdû'l-aḥad Nürî Efendî degildür/He is not the known and famous 'Abdû'l-aḥad Nürî Efendî.*" Mirzâzâde Mehmed Sâlim Efendî, *Tezkire-i Sâlim*, TSK, H.1271. For the biographies of Seyyid Hasan and his son who also wrote some poetry, see 250a (s.v. "Nürî") and 256a (s.v. "Vaḥyî") respectively.

attachment to the convent-mosque complex in Balat as a *seyh*-preacher, Seyyid Hasan records how many sermons he delivered, and their locations, even enumerating the distinguished members of his audience on certain occasions, but not once does he allow us a glimpse into the contents of those sermons, let alone into his emotions while preaching. Neither do we get — and this is perhaps the most disappointing aspect of a Sufi's diary — any descriptions of our dervish's *aḥvāl*, namely his mystical states or experiences.

The *Şoḥbetnâme* rather provides us with Seyyid Hasan's social life as a member of his order, and that explains the curious title of the book. This is a log of companionship, *şuḥba* in the original Arabic sense of the word as it appears in classical Sufi treatises such as as-Sulamī's *Kitāb ādāb aṣ-şuḥba* and not in the related but transformed Turkish sense of "friendly conversation" — of which this *Şoḥbetnâme* contains almost no record, either in direct or indirect voice.<sup>(42)</sup> By far the majority of entries in the diary relate the social occasions in which our diarist took part. Among such occasions, dinner parties with fellow Sünbülīs obviously constituted the highlights of his social life. He never tired of specifying at whose house such gatherings took place or of listing those who were present; some of the names are repeated so often that it is impossible to overemphasize the sense of intimacy and of the close-knit character of this community of brethren (*iḥvān*) which is conveyed in the diary. The injunction to be found in the order's code book that "it is one of the conditions of the order for the poor ones (i.e., brethren) to show more affection to one another than to their full brothers" seems not to have fallen on deaf ears.<sup>(43)</sup>

Some of these friends apparently did not hold any other jobs, but, like our author, drew some kind of salary from the income of pious foundations as well as from the huge redistributive machine

(42) Abū 'Abd ar-Rahmān as-Sulamī (d. 1021), *Kitāb ādāb as-Şuḥba*, ed. M. J. Kister (Jerusalem, 1954). One of the copies used in this edition is located in Istanbul, Süleymaniye Ktp., Şehit Ali 1114. For another classical discussion of *şuḥba* in a Sufi treatise, which was well-known among Ottoman dervishes, see 'Umar b. Muḥammad Suhrawardī (d. 1234), *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*.

(43) This "code book" is appended, by a different hand, to the hagiography written by Seyyid Hasan's father; Üniversite Ktp., İbnülemin M.K. 2956, 49b-52b. The citation is on 51b.

called the Ottoman state.<sup>(44)</sup> Various other “full-time dervishes” and minor religious functionaries (such as *mütevelli*, *imâm*, *şeyhzâde*, *dede*) make up the most integral part of Seyyid Hasan’s social world. From the *Şoḥbetnâme*, we learn of the intricate web of relationships established, on the basis of family ties as well as order affiliation and *maḥalle* solidarity, between that social world and other sectors of Ottoman society : most notably, the *eşnâf* (shop owner-artisans) and mid-level members of the ‘*askerî* (military-administrative) class. Numerous tradesmen (spice-sellers, grocers, bakers, book binders, quilt-makers and other) are recounted at various social gatherings in Seyyid Hasan’s diary. We also read of *keḥhüdâs*, *çavuşes*, or *beşes* (titles for various positions in the military-administrative class) on those gatherings. One of Seyyid Hasan’s sisters is married to a *çavuş* whom she later divorces by her own initiative, and another one to the son of a former vice-treasurer (*orta defterdâr*).

Occasions that bring these people together are not limited to dinner parties; our diarist also records post-dinner get-togethers; festivities like weddings and circumcision ceremonies; or sad ones like funerals inevitably followed by ritual *helva*-eating and prayer ceremonies; joint visits to graveyards; friendly walks; coffee parties; social calls to other Sufi orders; visits to shops for errands or socializing; and certainly *zikir* sessions. Through a rather routine register of all these activities and people involved over an extended period of four years, the *Şoḥbetnâme* provides us with a personal and immediate account of the social activities and functions of vakıf- or *tarikat*-affiliated salary-drawing functionaries. Increasingly alienated from the modernizing elites and deemed parasitic in later centuries, this little-studied social group clearly emerges in the *Şoḥbetnâme* as an agent of social and ideological cohesion in the pre-modern Ottoman urban fabric.<sup>(45)</sup>

In addition to participants at dinner-parties, Seyyid Hasan quite often lists the menu. In fact, when he is most diligent in his diarist’s role, he first lists the people by name, then assigns

(44) Seyyid Hasan mentions on some occasions (e.g., I: 146a and II: 1b) receiving his salary (*vazîfe*) from the customs (*gümrük*), namely, from the revenue of Istanbul’s customs houses.

(45) Ms. Molly Greene, graduate student at Princeton University, has analyzed the data in the 1545 *vakıf tahrîr* register of Istanbul and produced significant information on the quantitative dimensions of this social group and its *vakıf*-related functions.

numbers in ascending order to each name indicating precisely how many brethren there were, and then catalogues the menu in the same fashion, enumerating each item — signs of an obsession with ordering the elements of his life that no doubt contributed to his keeping a diary. But another reason for the diligence our author displayed in recording what he ate was probably more basic: he seems to have enjoyed and cared for his food. When a seasonal fruit first became available, he found it news worthy of being recorded; he similarly did not fail to mention where and when he had his first lamb in spring. Delicacies sold in the streets, such as pickled peppermint, proved too attractive for him to remember another injunction from the code book, namely that “one should not eat the food of the marketplace so long as one is able.”<sup>(46)</sup> Food-related information is so ubiquitous in the diary that it even interferes with accounts of death, including those of the diarist’s family members.

The first few months of the diary are filled with news of the plague that was then reigning in Istanbul. Family and friends were dying off, there were losses to be grieved over.<sup>(47)</sup> This may well have been what prompted Seyyid Hasan to keep a diary — an ephemeris to re-member, to hold on to some of that comforting human warmth which was proving to be all-too-ephemeral. Seen from another angle, from the point of view of one’s relationship to God, daily record-keeping of minutia seems most suited for times when every single day, every single meal, every single pleasure of human company was something to be grateful for. During this epidemic, our author loses a wife, two sons and a daughter in addition to various more distant relations and acquaintances. When he hears of his wife’s mortal illness during a visit to relatives in the suburbs, for instance, he immediately records his preparations for the road, not failing to mention that he was given some bread and *kashkaval* cheese; better yet, he adds that he had the inside of the bread removed for placing cheese in it.<sup>(48)</sup> After reaching home, he finds her in extreme, indescribable

(46) Üniversite, Ibnülemin M.K. 2956, 50a: “kâdir oldukça çârşû ța’amuñ yimeye.”

(47) For a psychological study of grief as it appears in nineteenth-century American diaries and the role of diary-keeping in dealing with grief, see Paul C. Rosenblatt, *Bitter, Bitter Tears: Nineteenth-Century Diarists and Twentieth-Century Grief Theories* (Minneapolis, 1983).

(48) *Şoĥbetnâme*, I: 5a.

pain only to die a couple of hours later. When *helva* was cooked that night — traditional practice after a death — our author not only records this fulfillment of customary obligation, but also adds in an extremely rare use of rhyming prose: “Lady Selim[e?] cooked it. Its taste and exquisiteness knew no boundaries and was beyond comparison.”<sup>(49)</sup> Lest it be thought that Seyyid Hasan was an insensitive husband, the next sentence provides a corrective: “feeling tired from the road, I intended to rest in the small room but sleep was not in reach; so I went to the deceased’s room and waited by her side meditating till morning.”<sup>(50)</sup> After taking care of her burial site and the proper alms early next day, he returns home for the washing; as he sees her body being taken down the stairs, he writes: “such sorrow and crying overcame my inside that to describe it is not possible.”<sup>(51)</sup> This is one of the rare passages where our diarist explicitly expresses his emotions. Yet, upon his return from her burial, we read that he had lunch with some brethren: “our food consisted of cheese and honeydew and watermelon, but I am not certain whether we had grapes, well I am also hesitant about the watermelon; the cheese struck me as fresh.”<sup>(52)</sup>

Seyyid Hasan is interested not only in his food, but also in his sleep. Anytime he slept someplace other than his own home, which happened quite often in this world of intimate friendships and accomodating domestic lives (within regulated boundaries of gender segregation which is certainly far from absolute according to his diary), he recorded it in his diary, even if it were a daytime nap in a neighbor’s shop. On the same mundane level, the diary also notes when he has taken a shave or sometimes also a bath or a dive into the sea. This should not surprise us, however, since visits to the barber or the public bath were more than hygienic affairs for an Ottoman; these occasions were an integral part of one’s social life. European observers in pre-modern Near East often noted with some bewilderment that barber shops functioned like an alternate to the coffeehouses when the latter were banned as hotbeds of sedition, as it so often happened in Ottoman history. Public baths similarly created possibilities for social

(49) *Ibid.*, I: 5b/6a.

(50) *Ibid.*, I: 6a.

(51) *Ibid.*, I: 7b.

(52) *Ibid.*, I: 9b/10a.

gatherings — explicitly enumerated among places over which the *muhtesib* had to keep close surveillance. Bath sessions in the diary are embellished by hot drinks — in our author's case, coffee. He in fact records quite frequently where and with whom he had coffee, occasionally referring to his morning activities as having happened "after coffee/*ba'de' l- kahve*." Strikingly, however, he never mentions going to a coffeehouse, which may simply be due to the fact that coffeehouses were ironhandedly repressed during much of the Köprülü era when Seyyid Hasan was keeping his diary. We also read of curfews at times but the author never dwells on their political circumstances.

In fact Seyyid Hasan writes very little about the world outside his insular social environment; there is not a single non-Muslim mentioned in the diary. In relation to broader political events, he only makes a few short entries throughout four years; and when he does, they are so casual as if he could not care less: "celebrations were begun for (the conquest of) the castle of Uyvar; in the meantime this *faḳīr* slept at my mother's."<sup>(53)</sup> In a similarly casual manner, he registers the burial of Köprülü Mehmed Paşa without a single note of emotion or even a vague attempt at a statement of political implication.<sup>(54)</sup> Only a few lines later, however, we read that he visited the deceased grand vezir's tomb with a group of his brethren — a telling act of respect.

Such abrupt turns of mood from casual and matter-of-factly to sensitive and respectful that are observed also in his account of his wife's death seem contradictory to the modern reader, giving rise to a comic sense. This humorous effect should not be attributed to Seyyid Hasan's literary intentions, which he must have entertained at least to some extent judging by the fact that he occasionally addresses his "reader" with phrases like "*ma'lūm ola ki*/may it be known that" or "*şadede gelem*/let us return to the topic," but to the mental distance between us and our diarist. What we read as funny shifts between the serious and the frivolous, between the solemn and the mundane — particularly in

(53) *Ibid.*, II: 134b. Though not of major military significance, Uyvar was of tremendous symbolic import in that it represented a last-ditch effort by the Ottoman state to retain its self-identity as a continuously conquering and expanding power. Compare this entry for 1 August 1914 from the diary of Franz Kafka: "Germany has declared war on Russia. — Swimming in the afternoon."

(54) *Ibid.*, I: 38a.

light of his mystical vocation — can also be read as signs of an inner harmony or of a stoic sensibility that does not make such distinctions. Isn't everything about this world transitory and mundane, anyway? his attitude seems to be. What is there to be enjoyed but human companionship in a fairly comfortable existence?(55) I do not intend to imply that Seyyid Hasan was a man of exceptional wisdom and philosophical insight; to the contrary, his diary reflects no philosophical bent of mind, no critical consciousness whatsoever. His was an extremely well-defined, relatively unproblematic world where inherited social and mental attitudes, as well as institutionalized, socially integrated, financially secure convent-life made possible a slow-paced, non-antagonistic existence which was not conducive to the development of a confessional approach to selfhood.

As such, this Ottoman diary has no affinity with Western autobiographic literature, which is generally, but less and less convincingly as we have seen, tied to the emergence of individuality in the Renaissance though not without earlier examples such as St. Augustine's monumental work of self-scrutiny.(56) To give a more relevant example, since autobiography might be considered a related but separate category, Samuel Pepys' well-known nine-year diary (which coincidentally starts one year before the *Şöhbetnâme*) not only contains frequent examples of self-criticism or self-mockery, but is written from a perspective removed from his self; it is as if Pepys the diarist was different from and watching from a critical distance Pepys the protagonist, as if there was a separation of the behaving self from the observing or scrutinizing

(55) Even though Stoicism, either as a philosophical school or as a means of spiritual training, had no direct legacy in Seyyid Hasan's world, the attitudinal parallels are obvious. It was in fact part of Stoic spiritual training in Antiquity to cultivate vigilant attention to particular moments and situations so as to exercise indifference, "en nous faisant accepter chaque moment de l'existence dans la perspective de la loi universelle du cosmos." See P. Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris, 1981), who gives an excellent depiction of Stoicism as a practical philosophy. But we should note that being indifferent does not empty being carefree: "... l'indifférence ne signifie pas une absence d'intérêt, mais au contraire un égal amour (ne pas faire de 'différence') pour chaque instant de la vie."

(56) As a corollary, autobiographic writing has been seen as a specifically European phenomenon. Introducing *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, Brucker writes (p. 9) that the diaries by Pitti and Dati "deserve study... as an early and important chapter in the history of that peculiarly European genre, the autobiography."

self.<sup>(57)</sup> By contrast, there is no such third dimension in the *Şoḥbetnâme*, characterized by a miniaturist's flat depiction of neatly contoured figures that are not quite distinguishable from each other except in their social functions. Like figures in a Karagöz play, they appear in the diary only as a *şeyhzâde*, a cloth-merchant, a *çavuş*, a Mevlevî, or a representative of any other profession, rank, descent, career or order. As much as it represents a fresh break from traditional genres, the *Şoḥbetnâme* sits squarely within the world of classical Ottoman arts and letters which did not care to develop perspective paintings, novels, stage performances. Within that two-dimensional world, Seyyid Hasan appears to have drawn an intense pleasure in human solidarity, in being with brethren with whom he shared a close-knit social universe.

The *Şoḥbetnâme*'s value lies, more than anything, in giving us that sense of companionship exactly as its title promises. What we know about the social structure and institutional aspects of Ottoman Istanbul is animated not only with a wealth of information about the material life and daily activities of some individuals, but also with the ethos of daily life for a specific milieu — one that can not be comfortably situated in either courtly or folk traditions. If unique personal experiences of a mystical nature are not recorded, perhaps it is because our diarist felt the true path to the good life to lie not so much in individual experiences as in communal harmony — a sensibility that was rather common in Sufism which, even though it valued a certain degree of asceticism and occasional withdrawal from social life, did not condone rupture from society as in Christian monasticism.

It would be quite erroneous to give the impression that Seyyid Hasan lived in a society devoid of social conflicts and intellectual struggles, in an imaginary oriental haven of peace and tranquillity. Istanbul witnessed numerous bloody revolts between 1622 and 1688.<sup>(58)</sup> The seventeenth century was also a time of serious challenges to Sufi orders by a strong wave of *selefiyye*

(57) *The diary of Samuel Pepys: a new and complete transcription*, eds. R. Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley, 1970-1983).

(58) For a comprehensive look at the revolts in Istanbul from the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, see Chapter V of this author's unpublished M. A. Thesis, "Yeniçeris and Esnaf: Solidarity and Conflict," McGill University, 1981.

(represented by the Kādizādeli movement) which blamed Ottoman decline on the loss of purity in religion.<sup>(59)</sup> Its denunciation of various social practices, such as the use of coffee or tobacco, extended to a critique of Sufism as a heretical tendency, and found a sympathetic audience even in the Palace on occasions. However, for probably a large sector of Ottoman urban population including our author, the social and intellectual unrest of the seventeenth century led to an even stronger search for solidarity in small and familiar circles. While relations between groups turned sour, relations among individuals within groups were solidified. That is perhaps why it feels that the real protagonist of the *Şoḫbetnāme* is not any particular individual, not even Seyyid Ḥasan himself, but the labyrinthine network of companionship spun by a group of individuals neither of whom the diarist cares to singly depict or analyze. Instead, as if steeped in a particular sociological school, he focuses on meticulously mapping out the daily interactions among them.<sup>(60)</sup> The Sufi orders on the one hand countered and superceded the particularism of family, *maḥalle*, craft association, but on the other created their own particularisms within which one might find refuge at times of trouble in or with the social world at large. An order could represent a network of supra-kinship or supra-guild bridges to the rest of the society but, when desirable and to the extent possible, it could raise (some of) those bridges, let water gush into the moat, and turn to the social and spiritual resources of its particular universe until the siege would be over. Thus, if a sense of peace reigns in the diary, it is not necessarily the reflection of a wider social reality, but only of an inner one acquired through the insularity and fragmentation of social life.

While it is a unique work in many respects, the *Şoḫbetnāme* thus

(59) A contemporary account of the controversies raised by the Kādizādeli movement and its adversaries is in Kātib Çelebi, *Mizānū'l-ḥaḳḳ*. For a recent analysis, see M. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 45 (1986): 251-269.

(60) For a historian's formulation of the "interactionist" position in sociology and a relevant analysis of confraternities in Renaissance Florence, see Ronald F. Weissman, "Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology: The 'Chicago School' and the Study of Renaissance Society," in Richard C. Trexler, ed., *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1985): 39-46; and idem., *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1982).

belongs to its age, particularly when seen within the wider context of Ottoman personal literature, most of the other examples of which, already surveyed, stem from the post-Süleymanic age with its acute decline-consciousness, its sense of eroding stability, loss of control, and social dislocation.<sup>(61)</sup> The inward turn or the concern with the self, represented by the proliferation of autobiographic writing, can be seen as another, a more personal, face of an intellectual climate whose more public face is well-known through the abundance of works of decline and reform. This turn of mood, with its combination of concern with the self and perception of decline in the socio-political order, is exemplified in Ottoman historiography by the chronicle of Selânikî (d. 1600?) whose minute account of the troubled late sixteenth century reads like a timid forerunner of the reform treatises but also conveys a distinct diary-like flavor at times.<sup>(62)</sup> However, just like Selânikî and the authors of the full-blown reform treatises who formulate their views from within the system (unlike the meta-systemic theoretical formulations of European political thinkers of the time such as Hobbes or Locke), the authors of the first-person narratives do not care to develop a third dimension, an outside perspective in dealing with their selves.

To sum up, I hope to have shown that there is a wide spectrum of unknown or ignored first-person narratives urging us to reconsider the earlier dismissal of personal writings as a lacuna among Ottoman historical sources. There is every reason to assume that systematic research in manuscript collections will yield many more diaries, dream-logs, autobiographies, memoirs of captivity, or letters, which carry a potential of extending the horizons and traditional boundaries of Ottoman studies, introducing a new personal dimension to Ottoman social and cultural

(61) Compare the connection Rosenthal makes between the relative abundance of autobiographic works during the time of the Crusades and the emotional instability of the time in his *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968), 175.

(62) I do not imply that the historian mentions his own experiences in describing historical incidents or that he cites personal acquaintances to corroborate his evidence. Such personal "intrusions" to support an otherwise third-person narrative are indeed quite common in the history-writing of all ages. Among Ottoman chronicles, that of 'Âşikpaşazâde provides the best-known examples. Selânikî's text, however, leans in the direction of a personal diary when he tells us, for instance, not only that he is appointed to a certain corps but also that he gave a tip to the person who brought the good news. *Târîh-i Selânikî* (Istanbul, 1281 A.H.), 313.

history. At the very least, the colorful examples of personal literature might enrich the rather shadeless palette of Ottoman cultural history which so far includes only sharp contrasts.

Tracing the paths of development and interrelations of these various related categories of personal literature is no less than delineating the history of the shifting boundaries between self and society in Ottoman culture. If the demarkations of the self were indeed re-drawn in the post-Süleymanic age and a process of individuation is discernible, as the proliferation of various first-person narratives, as the relative shedding of the inhibition to write of "what befell this poor one" indicates, then this process was not at all exclusive of embeddedness in larger organisms such as an order or a career group. The *Şoḥbetnâme* is only too eloquent in proving that *Individualitätsgefühl* is not necessarily the sole or primary driving sensibility in autobiographic writing. Even Evliyā, who considered himself "*seyyāḥ-i 'ālem ve ferīd-i ādem*/traveller of the world and unique among men," who worried in his youth whether he would ever be able to free himself of his family and his teachers in order to travel, left behind in his narrative not simply the tracks of his endless voyages back and forth within a vast space and the observations of his uniquely perceptive pair of eyes but also the traces of an intricate web of relations and apertures in the boundaries of his self through which he discovered and defined himself.

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